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## MOTHERWELL'S POETRY.



THOSE of our readers who love poetry, and have not yet made acquaintance with MOTHERWELL, should do so. It seems to us that he is very little read or spoken of in comparison with some of equal or less merits.

His heart-touching ballad, "My head is like to rend, Willie," has started the tears in many eyes, and seems to be best known of his productions. But there are others as beautiful, and of various character, which ought to be brought forward for our appreciation. There is scarcely anything in the small volume which comprises such of his poetry as he left to the world, that has not some peculiar charm of its own.

What would our dainty ladies of the present day say to being wooed in the brave, wild style in which Torf Einer's daughter was sought in the "Wooing Song of Jarl Egill?"

Ay, daughter of Einar,  
Right tall may'st thou stand,  
It is a Viking  
Who kisses thy hand;  
It is a Viking  
That bends his proud knee,  
And swears by Great Freya  
His bride thou must be!  
So Jarl Egill swore when his great heart  
was fullest.

Thy white arms are locked in  
Broad bracelets of gold:  
Thy girdle-sted's gleaming  
With treasures untold;  
The circle that binds up  
Thy long yellow hair,  
Is starred thick with jewels  
That bright are and rare;  
But gifts yet more princely  
Jarl Egill bestows,  
For girdle his great arm  
Around thee he throws;  
The bark of a sea-king  
For palace gives he,  
While mad winds and waves  
Shall thy true subjects be.

So richly Jarl Egill endowed his bright bride.

But there are better things than this in the book. His Scotch ballads, "Jennie Morrison," &c., are very charming; and there is one called "Elfinland Wood, an imitation of the Ancient Scottish Romantic

Ballad," that is a gem, unique and rich. We will quote a verse or two to show the style:

The ladie's handis were quhyte als milk,  
(Ringis my luve wore mair nor ane,)   
His skin was safter nor the silk;  
(Lilly bricht schinis my luvis halse bane.)

Nevir ane word that ladie sayd;  
(Schorrest red has leas to mend,)   
But on his harp she evir played;  
(There nevir was mirth that had nocht end.)

"The Madman's Love" is a vivid poem, somewhat chilly to read, displaying a good deal of imaginative power. His address to "Flesh and Blood! sweet Flesh and Blood!" sends a thrill through the veins of a sensitive person; but fascinates him to read on, nevertheless, and find out the sequel to the Madman's sad and incoherent story. He won a confession of love from the maiden he adored the night before departing upon a long and dangerous voyage:

Nay, start not! one was Flesh and Blood,  
A dainty, straight-limbed dame;  
That clung to me, and sobbed—oh, God!  
Struggling with maiden shame,  
She faltered forth her love, and swore—  
"ON LAND OR SEA, THINE EVERMORE!"

He was obliged to leave her; but still, wherever his vessel wandered, comforted by her promises, his heart still clung to the sainted rock where they had stood when she avowed her preference. His ship touched a foreign shore; he, with his company, inspired with chivalrous ardor, fought the heathen nation they had come to subdue, and he was taken captive:

They hammered iron on my hand,  
And iron on my knee;  
They bound me fast with many a band,  
To pillar and to tree;  
They flung me in a loathsome pit,  
Where loathly things were rife—  
Where newt, and toad, and bat would sit,  
Debating for my life,  
On my breast-bone; and one and all  
Hissed, fought, and voided on their thrall.

Still they could not stick their venom to the core of his heart, for it was far away, keeping its tryst with the lonely maiden who had sworn, "thine—thine forevermore;" and after a long time came deliverance—his plumed helm was again upon his brow, again he crossed the wave, and again he stood, in the moonlight, upon the cliff where he had bidden her farewell. He sat down in the shadow, with a sense

that she was coming to him; and she did pass by, but as the bride of another, and that other his younger brother:

I heard a dull, hoarse, chuckle sound  
Beside that trysting-tree;  
I saw uprising from the ground  
A ghastly shape like me!

And then he stood between the bride and groom, and one fell dead upon the sod—

And then the boiling linn that night,  
Flung on its shores a lady bright.

And ever after that he is a wild and frightful wanderer.

It is in his gentle, melancholy songs that we love Motherwell best. Although he published his poems in 1832, and died in 1835, in the preface to this re-publication it is avowed that they can learn but little of his history. That he was of an affectionate and sensitive heart, and that the "winds of heaven" visited his gentle nature roughly, or at least somewhat too coldly, we can but infer from the plaintive, sometimes anguished, music of his songs. In the "Lines given to a friend a day or two before the decease of the writer," is breathed a calm, resigned, and beautiful spirit, which wins us to think tenderly of his grave. What a line is this!

*When the great winds through leafless forests  
rushing,  
Sad music make.*

Sadly he asks:

When no star twinkles with its eye of glory  
On that low mound,  
And wintry storms have with their ruins hoary  
Its lowness crowned;  
Will there be then one versed in misery's story  
Pacing it round?

It may be so—but this is selfish sorrow  
To ask such meed—  
A weakness and a wickedness to borrow  
From hearts that bleed,  
The wailings of to-day, for what to-morrow  
Shall never need.

And so we love him for his unselfishness.

"Sing high, sing low, thou moody wind," is full of beauty. At the many charms of his little volume we have only hinted, to remind our readers that MOTHERWELL has been somewhat neglected amid the more brilliant poets of his time; and to hope that the lovers of sweet and exquisite rhyme will turn to him more frequently for pleasure. In this day of affectations and "dainty conceits," his homely rhymes are a luxury.